

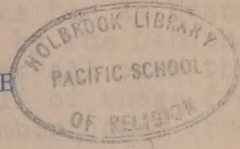
CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by

THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE

Sigtuna, Sweden



Director: Dr. HARRY JOHANSSON, Sigtuna, Sweden

Editor: Rev. JOHS. LANGHOFF, Øster Egesborg per Mern, Denmark

No. 77

December 6th, 1961.

DENMARK

The Common Market and the "Catholic Danger".

In connection with the negotiations for Denmark joining the European Common Market the heavy Roman-Catholic dominance in the member countries has caused misgivings in certain quarters. In reference to such misgivings the Danish Ambassador in Paris, Mr. Eyvind Bartels, addressing the Students' Association in Copenhagen said:

"There is much talk in Denmark about the danger of Catholicism. I do not believe this danger to be very great, in as much as the religious problem in Denmark is not the one of Protestantism versus Roman-Catholicism but rather that the Danes are atheists. It may be questioned whether this is an outcome of the liberation from the Church which Protestantism induced, the fact being that few are capable, like Luther, to grasp the idea of God directly through Christ. Here the Church has filled a gap. The strength of Roman-Catholicism lies in a much clearer realization than Luther's of human limitation and that the essence of Christianity is humility, and I venture to assert that for this very reason Catholicism has created more free people than Protestantism has.

The danger that Denmark should become Roman-Catholic by joining the Common Market therefore hardly exists. On the other hand, it might be hoped that closer contact with the Continent and the discussion of ethics going on there might contribute to restore genuine freedom of thought, based on faith - true independence coming from within, as we know."

Dealing with the same question in the "Vendsyssel Tidende" the former Minister of Church Affairs in Denmark, Rev. Carl Hermansen, Rural Dean, says, among other things:

"It is of course possible that Roman Catholic efforts will be intensified, but honestly, would that be so terrible? Suppose that 30,000 Roman-Catholics became 300,000 under the impact of our joining the Common Market, i.e. a minority Church which we would come up against time after time and must reckon and compete with. Might this not be a healthy cure? An honest contest of minds has always been preferable to the mere hammering in an eiderdown. And might not the opening of the frontiers pave the way for intercourse across the boundaries, even the confessional boundaries - might it not be possible for us to learn something from them and they from us? At any rate it is a poor argument that by opening the frontiers we open the doors to the big bad wolf in Rome to come and eat us. He who dies from fright should be buried in the gutter, as the saying goes."

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"There is much talk in Denmark about the danger of Catholicism. I do not believe this danger to be very great, in as much as the religious problem in Denmark is not the one of Protestantism versus Roman-Catholicism but rather that the pages are abated. It may be questioned whether this is an outcome of the liberation from the Church which Protestantism induced, the fact being that few are capable, like Luther, to grasp the idea of God directly through Christ. Even the Church has filled a gap. The strength of Roman-Catholicism lies in a much clearer realization than Luther's of human limitation and that the essence of Christianity is humility, and I venture to suggest that for this very reason Catholicism has created more true people than Protestantism has."

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Dealing with the same question in the "Vestergaard Tidende" the former Minister of Church Affairs in Denmark, Rev. Carl Henningsen, Rural Dean, says, among other things:

"It is of course possible that Roman Catholic efforts will be intensified, but honestly, would that be so terrible? Suppose that 50,000 Roman-Catholics became 300,000 under the impact of our joining the Common Market, i.e. a minority Church which we would come up against time after time and must reckon and cope with. Might this not be a healthy cure? At present contact of minds has always been preferable to the mere hammering in an altar-down. And might not the opening of the frontiers pave the way for interconfessional agreements, the boundaries, even the confessional boundaries - might it not be possible for us to learn something from them and they from us? At any rate it is a poor argument that by opening the frontiers we open the door to the big bad wolf in Rome to come and eat us. He who dies from faith should be buried in the gutter, as the saying goes."

200 Entries in International Architectural Competition.

The international competition for suggestions for an Evangelical-Lutheran church in a Copenhagen suburb, arranged by the Danish Ministry of Church Affairs, has been received with interest all over the world. 200 suggestions have been received, more than half of these from foreign architects and artists. A particularly large number comes from Germany, Turkey, and Poland.

The international jury, headed by Mrs. Bodil Koch, Minister of Church Affairs, has now begun sorting out and examining the proposals. The Prizes amount to a total of 100,000 Danish Crowns.

Public Opinion Poll in Copenhagen Suburban Parish.

In a public opinion poll, conducted by the Social Folk High School of Denmark in the Copenhagen suburban parish of Brøndbyøster, 213 persons from 100 families, chosen at random, were asked 179 questions. When asked about the most important purpose in life, 83 o/o answered that it was the welfare of themselves and their families and only 3 o/o thought it was "religious". 70 o/o confessed to believing in God, 18 o/o did not. On the other hand, only 29 o/o said they were "religious" (without any further definition of the word), 68 o/o were not. 79 o/o wanted religious instruction at school, 17 o/o were against it. 41 o/o taught their children to say their evening prayers, 42 o/o said they did not.

Brøndbyøster has grown to a population of 12,000 in a comparatively short time, most of them being young families working in Copenhagen. So far there is only one church in the parish, dating from the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, 84 o/o answered no, they did not need more churches in the district and only 15 o/o said yes. But to a supplementary question whether churches were superfluous altogether, only 9 o/o answered yes, 80 o/o no.

The results of the investigation have been lively commented upon, the emphasis being laid on the flimsy basis for it and on the special nature of the suburb as a "sleeping town" where the young families must concentrate on consolidating their homes. The most discouraging fact, the "Kristeligt Dagblad" feels, is the news that less than half of the persons approached teach their children to say evening prayers.

Government Committee on Information on Sexual Matters.

The Danish Government has set up a comprehensive committee for the purpose of examining the need for information, ethical guidance, and counselling in sexual matters. The reason is that in Denmark it is believed that there are roughly 20,000 abortions a year, i.e. every fourth pregnancy ends with abortion. The representative of the Ministry of Church Affairs on the committee is Bishop W. Westergaard Madsen, Copenhagen.

In an interview in the "Kristeligt Dagblad" the Chairman of the committee, Mrs. Kirsten Auken, M.D., says that information alone will not solve the problems, ethical guidance is also necessary. She summarizes her views thus:

"In our time we have nothing to go by. We have plenty of rules and opinions, but the important thing must be to find a mode of living and standards of intercourse in the widest possible sense of the word in fellowship with the young. We belong to a Western, that is a Christian, cultural sphere and this cannot be changed by taking a single problem out of the whole context."

500 Entries in International Architectural Commission

"The international competition for suggestions for an Evangelical Lutheran church in a Copenhagen suburb, arranged by the Danish Ministry of Church Affairs, has been received with interest all over the world. 500 suggestions have been received, more than half of them from foreign architects and artists. A particularly large number comes from Germany, Turkey, and Poland.

The international jury, headed by Mrs. Bodil Koch, Minister of Church Affairs, has now begun sorting out and examining the proposals. The prizes amount to a total of 100,000 Danish Crowns.

Public Opinion Poll in Copenhagen Parish

In a public opinion poll, conducted by the Social Work High School of Denmark in the Copenhagen suburban parish of Brøndbyvester, 517 persons from 100 families, chosen at random, were asked 179 questions. When asked about the most important purpose in life, 85% answered that it was the welfare of themselves and their families and only 5% thought it was "religious". 70% confessed to believing in God, 18% did not. On the other hand, only 25% said they were "religious" (without any further definition of the word), 58% were not. 79% wanted religious instruction at school, 17% were against it, 1% thought their children to say their evening prayers, 12% said they did not.

Brøndbyvester has grown to a population of 12,000 in a comparatively short time, most of them being young families working in Copenhagen. So far there is only one church in the parish, leaving over the middle ages. Nevertheless, 81% answered no, they did not need more church in the district and only 15% said yes. But to a supplementary question whether churches were sufficient altogether, only 9% answered yes, 80% no.

The results of the investigation have been lively commented upon, the emphasis being laid on the timescale for it and on the special nature of the suburb as a "sleeping town" where the young families must concentrate on consolidating their homes. The most disappointing fact, the "Christeligt Bælg" feels, is the news that less than half of the persons approached each their children to say evening prayers.

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In an interview in the "Christeligt Bælg" the Chairman of the committee, Mrs. Kirsten Aulén, M.P., says that information alone will not solve the problem, ethical guidance is also necessary. She answers her views thus:

"In our time we have nothing to go by. We have plenty of rules and opinions, but the important thing must be to find a mode of living and standards of intercourse in the widest possible sense of the word in fellowship with the young. We belong to a system, that is a Christian, cultural sphere and this cannot be changed by taking a single problem out of the whole context."

News in Brief:

- The President of Danish Church in Foreign Countries, Rev. Sven Nielsen, Copenhagen, has died, 71 years of age.
- Christian Aid to the Blind in Denmark has started publishing a "Christian sound periodical" for blind people in the shape of tape recordings of church news and religious articles. There will be 12 numbers a year.

FINLANDIncreased Activity for Bible Study.

The interest in bible knowledge has increased considerably in Finland in the last decade. So far bible study courses have been conducted primarily by private persons and voluntary organizations, but this autumn many of the congregations of the Lutheran National Church have likewise started bible school classes, prompted by the Central Association for Parish Work.

Not All Foolishness is Gospel

Although the Gospel is foolishness to the wise of this world, it is not all foolishness that is gospel truth, the Finnish Professor of Theology, Dr. Miko Juva, writes in a contribution to the discussion about the prophecy from Oulu (Uleåborg) - the prophecy in which it said that, unless there were 800,000 believing Christians in Finland by September 1st, 1961 (later extended to January 1st, 1962), the nation would be driven into exile. Professor Juva's article goes on:

"Several Christian periodicals and the daily Press publish texts in which God, without further explanation and speaking in the first person, addresses the Finnish people, giving them advice, even as to what they should eat, and threatening them with earthly disasters and possible destruction. No doubt some Christians, alarmed by the message from Oulu, have awakened to a new sense of responsibility with regard to prayer. But in spite of this, we cannot close our eyes to the negative influence of this message on other and considerably wider circles. We are living at a time when efforts are made to keep Christianity at a distance of the individual, to make it a hobby of certain "religiously minded" people. By questioning the faith of others because they cannot accept overwrought imaginations we forge a weapon in this contest. Not all who prophesy have their messages from God. We need to turn back from an unrealistic kind of Christianity which clings to omens and miracles to a simple conception of the Gospel."

Finnish Minister for Students from Developing Countries in London.

A Finnish clergyman Rev. Timo Saarelma has gone to London on an invitation from the Lutheran Council of Great Britain in order to act as minister to students from Asia and Africa studying in the British capital.

Finnish Kirchentag in Sweden.

The first Kirchentag for Finnish immigrants in Sweden was conducted recently at Västerås. Among those taking part in the Kirchentag from Finland was Bishop Eero Lehtinen, Diocese of Lapua (Lappo), and from Sweden Bishop John Cullberg, Västerås. Finland's Ambassador to Sweden, Mr. Sakari Tuomioja, brought a greeting from the Finnish Government.

In connection with the Kirchentag, Finnish and Swedish churchmen discussed what might be done to further Finnish congregational life in Sweden.

Shortage of Clergymen in Several Dioceses in Finland.

There is an alarming shortage of clergymen in the Swedish Diocese of Borgå, Dean Olav Schalin, Borgå (Porvoo) reveals. Several parishes in the skerries have no ordinary vicar, and in Helsinki (Helsingfors) and environs there are at least four vacant encumbencies. A considerable number of retirements may be expected, furthermore, in the next 3 - 4 years, and the influx of Divinity students has, unfortunately, been small in recent years.

Prospects are more hopeful in the Finnish Dioceses, in so far as there are nearly 800 theological students at the Faculty at Helsinki (Helsingfors).

But in spite of this the shortage of clergymen is severely felt in many places, especially in the Diocese of Oulu (Uleåborg). The Diocese of Oulu is the one farthest to the north-east in Finland.

The salaries in the Lutheran National Church of Finland are rather small compared with those of the other Scandinavian churches. As they are fixed in relation to the number of members in the different parishes the result is that they are lowest in the thinly populated areas, where at the same time the parishes may be very large in size.

Active Atheism in the Student World.

According to the "Students' Magazine" an advertisement in a Metropolitan newspaper in which a University "atheistic club" appealed to all atheistic undergraduates to celebrate "prayer day eve" (the Saturday night before one of the public days of prayer of the Lutheran National Church of Finland) by a party in the assembly rooms of one of the Åbo-Students' Houses has caused conspicuous attention.

"It is rather amazing", the paper writes, "that so-called 'academic citizens' among whose chief characteristics should be the sense of propriety can be guilty of such behaviour. The atheistic club, with its rowdy processions and inverted crucifixes, is much too childishly ridiculous to suit undergraduates", the 'Students' Magazine' feels, asking whether it is absolutely necessary to poke fun at things that are sacred to a great many people.

NORWAY

The Voluntary Church Meeting on Current Problems.

The Voluntary Church Meeting, comprising mostly representatives of the nine Dioceses in Norway, convened in Oslo at the beginning of November. In lectures and discussions the main theme of the meeting, "The Rehabilitation of the Home", was dealt with from various points of view. But certain current problems were also debated. Thus a resolution was passed in support of a statement by the Norwegian Parliament in connection with the present detonations of nuclear bombs.

The question of women ministers was also discussed and a majority decided to adopt a resolution requesting the Bishops' Conference to help to make it possible, in acknowledgement of the freedom of conscience, in congregations where one is obliged to accept women ministers to obtain other regular ecclesiastic assistance.

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The Church Meeting resolved to request the Institute for Christian Upbringing to start an investigation of the effects of films and other means of mass communication on the behaviour and mode of life of young people.

The new Bishop of Bergen (Björgvin), Bishop Per Juvkam, was elected President of the Church Meeting in succession to Bishop Johannes Smemo, Oslo, who did not wish to stand again. It was further decided that the Church Meeting, at present meeting every second year, in future should be convened only every fourth year, and that the number of representatives nominated by the Dioceses should be reduced from 168 to 132, two thirds of these to be laymen.

The following objects clause was inserted in the statutes: "The Voluntary Church Organization is to be a forum for exchange of religious opinions and will take up for consideration topical problems in the life of the Church and the community and thus serve to unify and encourage all activities within our Lutheran National Church."

Organ for Contact between Church and Voluntary Organizations.

In the chief publication of the Christian Young People's Union in Norway "Ny Dag", the Secretary General, Mr. Sverre Magelsen, has proposed the establishment of an organ for contact between the official Lutheran National Church and the voluntary organizations within the National Church. The new organ should be a forum for private discussions on the problems that may crop up between the Church and the voluntary organizations, thus also providing an opportunity for more personal intercourse and understanding of the value of a concentrated effort for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. In this way it should be possible to arrive at a natural distribution of work which would justify the existence of different groups and to avoid much discussion which otherwise is apt to swallow energy and spirit.

In the "Kirkebladet" a similar proposal is put forward by the Programme Controller of the State Broadcasting Company, Rev. Sigurd Lunde, who especially has in mind, however, the personal conduct between representatives of church papers and the voluntary religious publications with a view to making the debates in public more impersonal and more matter of fact.

The President of the Home Mission Society, Rev. Fredrik Wisløff, one of the prominent men of the voluntary organizations, says in an interview in the Christian daily paper in Oslo "Vårt Land" that such a permanent contact organ as proposed by Mr. Magelsen, is hardly necessary since it must be possible to conduct such discussions on problems in the already existing councils and church assemblies. Nor will it be possible to support Mr. Lunde's suggestion so long as the different parties do not, all of them, show respect for the opinions of their opponents.

Do Not Celebrate Christmas in Advance!

A number of Norwegian women's organizations have asked business people and others not to start celebrating Christmas too early. They suggest that Christmas displays and such like should not begin until around First Sunday in Advent, and that Christmas trees are not included in decorations, but are reserved for the homes. Christmas parties in associations and possible lunch parties in offices and simi-

places should be postponed until after New Year's so as not to take the shine out of the celebrations at home.

The Norwegian Housewives' Union was alone about a similar request four years ago, but this time a number of other women's associations have joined in the appeal which is published in the professional business papers also. In the last few years the first Christmas displays have appeared at a notably later date than usual.

Church Collection in Aid of Developing Countries Launched.

The special undertaking of the Norwegian Lutheran National Church in aid of developing countries, the establishment of a model farm at Abakaliki in East Nigeria, has now been launched. On November 10th the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation brought a programme about the project, and the collection for it, hoped to give 3 million Norwegian Crowns, is now well under way. The plan is that for the first 10 years the agricultural centre, comprising farming, forestry, and animal husbandry, will be run by Norwegians, Nigerians carrying on alone from that time.

Two Norwegian agricultural experts and their families have already left for Abakaliki and three families more will leave in the next few months so that the whole project may be started by May next year.

News in Brief:

- In a letter to the Northern Diakonia Council, Mr. Godtfred Rekkebo, Parish Worker, suggests changing one of the Northern Diakonia Schools into a folk high school at which Northern Parish Workers might be trained for service in the developing countries. The school should be open also to holders of scholarships from the developing countries.

- The order of Knight of St. Olav, First Class, has been conferred on Commander Tobias Ugrim, Commander in Chief of the Salvation Army in Norway, in appreciation of his religious and humanitarian contributions.

SWEDEN

New Bishop in the Diocese of Visby.

As successor to the Rt. Rev. Algot Anderberg who is retiring at the end of this year the Very Rev. Olle Herrlin, at present Dean of Uppsala, has been appointed Bishop of Visby.

Conversion Causes Lively Debate.

The conversion of Dr. Stig Lindholm, Lecturer at the Theological Faculty at Uppsala, from the Swedish Lutheran National Church to the Roman Catholic Church (see last number of CN), has given rise to a lively debate, not only in the religious Press, but also in the daily papers. "Stockholms-Tidningen" takes the conversion as a proof of the Catholicizing tendencies within Swedish High Church circles. "Svenska Dagbladet" does not find it particularly alarming that some theologians and laymen join the Roman Church; the clergymen and others whose hearts are more or less in Rome, but who remain in the Lutheran National Church, claiming to represent its true nature, constitute a much greater problem, the paper feels.

The weekly paper of the Confessional Front, the "Svensk Pastoral-tidskrift", sees the conversion in relation to developments in the Swedish Lutheran National Church during the last few years and says, among other things:

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"We now have four women ministers. How many clergymen have we lost instead, either by conversion or by their changing over to educational or other work? That this number is considerably greater is beyond any doubt. And how many Divinity students have we lost? Probably still many times more."

In the discussion about the conversion to Rome many people have not noticed that a Swedish-born Dominican Friar at the Church of Annunciation in Stockholm has left the Roman Catholic Church in order to return to the Lutheran National Church to which he formerly belonged. The "Svensk Pastoraltidskrift" points out that this is not the first case in later years of a Swedish Roman-Catholic priest returning to his "mother church".

First Diakonia Parliament in Sweden.

The Lutheran National Church of Sweden recently conducted its first "Diakonia Parliament" in Stockholm at which prominent members of all the home mission organs and institutions of the Church met in order to discuss common tasks and responsibilities. The meeting lasted for two days, opening with divine service at the Storkyrkan at which Bishop Helge Ljungberg delivered the sermon. An interesting debate on the relation of the public assistance in a welfare state to the diakonia activities of the Church disclosed that the parish work of the Church is still most necessary, not the least as an expression of neighbourly compassion, but that it should co-operate with and supplement public relief rather than compete with it. It was decided to conduct another "Diakonia Parliament" in three years' time.

At a meeting information was given that 5,766 Church sewing clubs with 150,000 members had raised no less than 10,5 million Swedish Crowns in one year for various religious purposes, including diakonia activities.

Reflections Caused by Novaja Semlja.

"It is now time to prepare oneself for a hard future", the organ of the Swedish Mission Covenant Church, the "Svensk Veckotidning", writes in connection with the Russian detonations of nuclear bombs at Novaja Semlja. "It would be a fallacy to believe that we should be allowed to watch a new contest of strength between the Great Powers from the side lines", the paper feels and goes on:

"We must bear in mind that we shall die. Not just in the usual sense that we are mortals, but that an 'evil, violent death' is threatening many of us who live in an age that is dominated by demonical powers. We should now preach about death. It should be emphasized that we may be faced with a sudden, painful death. But it should not be done out of panic or in order to frighten people; rather must it be done in an earnest, subdued manner, illuminated by the hope of eternal life. But it is our duty to make it clear to our generation that we have no permanent abode here. The realization that we are pilgrims on the move has now been reawakened after having been forgotten in an era of prosperity and progress."

Attacks on the Social-Ethical Committee.

In several editorials the Conservative paper, "Svenska Dagbladet", has attacked the Social-Ethical Committee of the Home Mission Board of the Church of Sweden which for some years has been arranging a number of contact meetings between representatives of the Swedish Lutheran National Church and the big organizations of interests, in-

cluding the Swedish Labour Movement. "Svenska Dagbladet" maintains that the Committee "is striving feverishly to make the Church a kind of Socialistic institution in particularly close connection with the political and professional Labour movement" and that "the Labour movement answers the invitation of the Church by making demands. Now and then it seems as if the prize for its participation is to be a changing of the Church as a House of God into a People's Assembly Hall". The Social-Ethical Committee is further accused of trying "to adapt the Church to the likings of such circles as are being approached at that particular moment."

Refuting these allegations as being without foundation, the weekly paper of the Home Mission Board, the "Vår Kyrka", emphasizes that the Church tries to get in touch with all the big professional and business organizations, regardless of their political adherences. The Labour movement has not made any demands that the Church should cease to be a true Church, and the "democratization" of the Church which the Social-Ethical Committee is accused of is only an attempt to make the lay section of the Church feel responsible for its well-being. In order that the Church may be able to get the message about Christ to the individual it is necessary for it to understand the situation in which he is actually living. And at the same time the Church also has a word to say about love and justice in the life of the community. The mutual contact between the Church and the professional organizations, including the Labour movement, is of paramount importance to the Church.

Norwegian Decoration for Swedish Assistance in the Congo.

The Norwegian Government has conferred the Order of Knight of St. Olav, First Class, on the Swedish consul in Leopoldville, Mr. Bengt Åkerren, as a token of appreciation for his efforts in aid of Norwegian missionaries during the unrest in the Congo. A secretary at the Swedish Consulate and a Swedish missionary couple have likewise been nominated Knights of the Order of St. Olav for their contributions in the same direction.

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